Interim Report for the Integration of Internationally-Trained Workers Project

Canadian Labour and Business Centre

September 15, 2003

Developed in collaboration with
United Way/Centraide of Ottawa
and LASI/World Skills

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, immigration has become the major contributor to the country's population and labour force growth. Between 1986 and 1996, the share of population net growth due to immigration grew from 13 to 71 percent. To achieve its full potential, thus, Canada and in particular its cities must attract, maintain and effectively utilize this growing pool of internationally-trained skilled workers.

In Ottawa, as in many other urban centres across the country, recently landed immigrants have a considerably lower labour force participation rate and a significantly higher unemployment rate than the Canadian born. This is despite a high level of official language knowledge, and education levels on par with, or higher than, those of the Canadian born. The percentage of Canada's immigrants who settle in Ottawa has remained at about 3% of all immigration to Canada over the past few years. Between 1996 and 2001, immigration made up 38% of Ottawa's population growth. More remarkable is the fact that 51% of those who immigrated to Ottawa in 2001 held a university degree. In the same year, 6.3% of all Canada's new immigrants with a Ph.D. intended to settle in Ottawa, almost twice the overall Ottawa settlement rate of 3.3% – the number of immigrants with a doctorate in that year exceeded the annual number of Ph.D. granted by the two local universities combined.

Despite this influx of highly-skilled immigrants, the failure to recognize their credentials contributes to higher levels of unemployment among them and to a poor match between jobs and skills. Recent Ottawa immigrants (Census 1996 data) aged 25 to 44 with a university degree were four times lore likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be unemployed. Even more alarming is the fact that for some recent immigrants, the transition from immigration to employment never happens. In light of the above, the case is increasingly clear that more can be done to facilitate the integration of immigrants and members of visible minorities into local labour markets.

Several recent studies, shed light on the difficulties faced by immigrants – including highly-skilled ones – in their attempt to join the labour force and participate fully in the country's social and economic life. One recent analysis of the Census 2001 data reveals that the length and intensity of unemployment among recent immigrants have worsened compared to the Canadian average and to the situation that prevailed twenty years ago, amounting to a transition penalty (CLBC, 2003). Another study observes that despite an average level of education that was higher than that of previous immigrant cohorts and of Canadians as a whole, recent immigrants' employment rate and earnings are lower than the Canadian average (McIsaac, 2003).

In an effort to address these labour market integration issues, the Ottawa Internationally Trained Workers project has been developed under the partnership of United Way/ Centraide Ottawa, the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, and LASI World Skills. The project's overall goal is to develop a community-based strategy aimed at facilitating the accreditation and integration of internationally-trained workers into the Ottawa economy.

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1. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM ELSEWHERE?

Although the occupational group discussions provided much information about barriers, solutions, and best practices, the development of a local strategy designed to facilitate the integration of foreign-trained workers into the local economic needs to take into consideration past and on-going initiatives aimed at easing the integrating of foreign-trained workers into the Canadian labour market. Recent inventories of such initiatives (Maytree Foundation, 2001; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002) suggest that there is a depth and scope of efforts designed to ease the transition from immigration to employment. Whether they relate to information access; language assessment; academic credential and competency recognition; language training; bridging and internship programs; mentoring programs; or financial assistance; these initiatives have successfully addressed one stage or another of the immigration to labour market integration process.

A quick scan of the literature makes it clear that reporting on all the relevant initiatives would go beyond the scope of this report. The focus, then, is on these existing provincial and national initiatives, and those pertaining to local strategies and models, that are of particular relevance to this Ottawa-based project.

1.1 Barriers to the successful integration of foreign-trained workers

Barriers to the integration of foreign-trained workers into the labour market are well documented, as attested by the number of publications dealing with this issue. Brouwer (1999), for one, describes in detail the difficulties facing Canadian immigrant professionals and tradespersons seeking employment in their field of expertise. The following provides an overview of the barriers identified by Brouwer:

- Difficulty in gaining recognition of foreign credentials due to unfamiliarity of regulatory bodies, employers, and academic institutions with foreign educational, training, technological, and professional standards;
- Lack of information for newcomers about how to access a profession or trade;
- Difficulty in gaining recognition of foreign work experience by occupational regulatory bodies and employers;
- The absence of appeal processes for those unfairly denied entry to regulated occupations;
- Lack of access to adequate, occupation-specific educational/training upgrading, language training and testing;
- Lack of uniformity of standards in regulated occupations across provinces and territories;
- Lack of Canadian experience making it difficult to access employment; and
- Piecemeal nature of interventions by nongovernmental organizations in their support to foreign-trained immigrants.

More recently, the Government of Manitoba has undertaken a province-wide Qualifications Recognition Initiative which resulted in the adoption of a Framework for a Strategy on Qualifications Recognition. The framework is designed to address a range of barriers which can be summarized as follows:

- Access to information: information regarding qualifications recognition available to immigrants, and information available to institutions responsible for assessing qualifications, being difficult to obtain and understand;
- Qualifications assessment and recognition practices: problems with criteria and standards, unfair treatment, and inadequacy of assessment mechanisms and procedures creating barriers;
- Costs and resources: not enough information about the costs and resources associated with credentials recognition;
- Complexity of the challenge: issues of translation and authentication of qualifications, and the autonomous nature of assessing institutions representing additional barriers; and
- Attitudes and approaches: comfort with status quo, complacency and a lack of a sense of urgency, and the existence of ethnocentrism and stereotyping.

Another provincial initiative, a B.C.-based roundtable on improving access to the professions and trades through prior learning assessment (PLA) and qualifications recognition held in March, 2002, also reported on a long list of gaps affecting qualifications and experience recognition. The list can be summarized along several themes:

- Lack of funding;
- Lack of information;
- Cross-agency communication and lack of integration;
- Complexity of PLA and lack of understanding of issues;
- Growing lack of technically knowledgeable assessors;
- Lack of appropriate bridging;
- Lack of employer involvement;
- No national standards in trades;
- Lack of articulated agreements; and
- No national system of internships.

McIsaac (2003) has argued in a recent article that the 'barriers that make access to the labour market difficult for immigrants are systemic.' She singles out the non recognition of credentials and experience by Canadian employers, educational institutions, and professional regulatory bodies as a key barrier, while noting the significance of other obstacles such as: (1) a lack of information about labour market integration provided to applicants overseas before they arrive in Canada; (2) the requirement that immigrants have Canadian work experience; the lack of effective tools to assess qualifications; and

(3) the lack of labour market language training and bridging programs to address specific gaps in qualifications.

All of the above references suggest that much is known about what the barriers to the integration of foreign-trained workers into the economy are. This observation would suggest that perhaps there is a need to take the discussion to the next level, that of policy development and implementation.

1.2 Systemic approaches and local strategies

A perusal of the literature (see the Bibliography) makes is clear that there is a wealth of initiatives and programs in place nationally and in some provinces – although some would argue that it is not enough – which are designed to alleviate the barriers preventing foreign-trained workers from getting their credentials and work experience recognized, and from matching their skills and qualifications to suitable employment. It is also clear, however, that most of these initiatives are either ad hoc, short term, or focused on a single occupation/trade or region. Partly as a recognition of that, a few recent initiatives have deliberately been put in place with a view to promote a more comprehensive, systematic approach to removing these barriers. The following provides highlights of two such initiatives.

The Maytree Foundation's model

The Maytree Foundation (2002) has argued for a more comprehensive approach to integrating immigrant workers into the Canadian economy. In *Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Canadian Economy*, the foundation in collaboration with Naomi Alboim proposes a systemic approach to the integration of skilled immigrants into Canada's labour markets.

The proposed approach encompasses a number of 'system components,' which can be summarized as follows:

a) Incentives for stakeholders to collaborate in designing, delivering and evaluating programs and services, and for immigrants to access them

b) Services and programs in the areas of: information; assessment services; expert advice; and bridging programs to fill identified gaps.

c) Leaders Council to foster collaboration, identify priorities and linkages, and communicate results.

Information, assessment, and expert advice services also include access to an Internet portal, vocational counseling and learning plans, and mentorship by Canadian practitioners. For their part, bridging programs could include academic courses, labour market language training – language training adapted to the workplace –, technical skills upgrading, and knowledge of Canadian workplace practices.

One of the central feature of Maytree's proposed approach is that it requires all stakeholders to work together to find and implement solutions. It thus offers an advantage

over the current system of ad hoc initiatives offered by various stakeholders without much coordination or integration.

Another important contribution made by Maytree's proposed model lies in the discussion of the potential roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders vis-à-vis the development, implementation and maintenance of this systematic approach to labour market integration. This breakdown of roles and responsibilities has the merit of being fairly detailed and comprehensive: it lists ten different categories of stakeholders and assign to them, for each of the system's components (Internet portal, mentorship, bridging, etc.) one or more of the following roles: information; access; funding; advice; lead; deliver; participate; support; beneficiary; and provider. Such a breakdown represents a potentially useful starting point for any discussion of roles and responsibilities in relation to integrating foreign-trained workers into the labour market.

From the perspective of developing a local strategy that would be suitable to the Ottawa context, the Maytree model comes a bit short in a number of areas. First, the model does not provide adequate treatment of the potential role played by unions and other workers associations in any strategy aimed at better integrating foreign-trained workers into local labour markets. In regulated occupations and trades such as teaching, construction-related trades, and nursing, to name a few, unions and workers associations play a critical role on both the supply and demand side of their respective labour markets and, as such, they need to be closely involved in the partnerships that are required to implement an effective strategy for supporting foreign-trained workers.

Another piece missing in the Maytree model is the fact that it has been conceived as a *national* approach to integrating immigrant skills into the economy, with the result that it falls short on prescriptions for developing a strategy aimed at a *local* labour market. While it is clear that some of the most significant barriers to the integration of foreign-trained workers are systemic – and their removal beyond the capacity of local stakeholders –, solutions need to correspond with each community's uniqueness in terms of demographic characteristics, labour market needs and capacities, and industry trends (McIsaac, 2003).

The case for adapting solutions to a local environment is increasingly being made. In her review of recent Census data on immigrants, McIsaac (2003) argued that 'multilateral agreements between municipal, federal and provincial governments would ensure that solutions reflect local priorities and help foster vertical and horizontal collaboration and co-ordination between governments and government departments.' She also pointed out that 'solutions require an approach that is coordinated and engages all the relevant stakeholders,' and she provides a road map for local intervention: convene the relevant stakeholders; identify local priorities; provide advice to federal and provincial governments; and coordinate and integrate programs and initiatives.

Toronto's Local Immigrant Employment Council

The case for a local strategy to integrate foreign-trained workers into the labour market has also been made in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). As part of its efforts to more

fully integrate its immigrants, the City of Toronto along with key stakeholders has been promoting the concept of a *local immigrant employment council* (TIEC). While not operational yet, the proposed council is designed to improve access to employment for immigrants in the GTA, a recognition of the importance of immigration to the region and of the need for it to function more effectively.

To a large extent, TIEC is a local adaptation of the Maytree national model, in that it brings together all the relevant stakeholders around the table and it seeks to find solutions that fit the local context (the Maytree foundation has in fact acted as a resource organization in the proposed design of the Council, and will likely coordinate the setting up and operation of its secretariat). Also worth noting are the following points:

- The TIEC represents an attempt to deal with the most important criticism expressed at past and current initiatives designed to ease the integration of foreign-trained workers into the labour market, that is, their ad hoc nature. In principle, TIEC is designed to have continuity by means of a flexible regional structure that brings to the table all the major stakeholders.
- Not unrelated to the above, the TIEC model is trying to address the sustainability issue that has plagued so many ad hoc initiatives, by establishing a core Council and by seeking core funding for its operations. Obviously, it remains to be seen whether indeed the Council will be able to secure such funding and commitment from key stakeholders, but the approach it is applying to tackling these challenges is most appropriate.
- The TIEC is also being designed with flexibility in mind, thanks to its reliance upon working groups for tackling emerging or pressing issues, drawing from the most relevant expertise and resources as needed.

Since the TIEC is very much an experimentation in progress, it is too early to derive any conclusions in terms of its potential effectiveness and relevance. At the very least, it has the merit of trying to move an innovative, conceptual framework into the realm of practical applications. A summary of TIEC's proposed key features can be found in Appendix B.

2. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE OCCUPATIONAL GROUP DISCUSSIONS?

An essential project requirement was to focus efforts at the level of individual occupational groups, ensuring that there would be a match between supply of internationally-trained workers on the one hand, and demand for workers in the occupations they were trained for, on the other. The project thus involved establishing occupation-specific working groups in four areas – teachers, engineers, nurses and masons –, with representation on each of the groups to include people from the immigrant community, agencies, employers, regulating bodies and others that would add expertise to this part of the project. These four occupational groups were chosen because a reasonable level of (current or future) demand for workers in these occupations was predicted, and corresponding numbers of internationally-trained workers existed in the LASI World Skills database. A fifth group – the doctors – was also chosen for focus group discussions to be held in October, 2003.

Two or three meetings were held with each group, focusing on the identification of barriers to integrating into the labour market, and solutions to removing these barriers. The following provides an analysis of the process that underlies the occupational group meetings, then describes the barriers and solutions that were common to the four groups, and finally discusses recommended actions and outcomes.

2.1 Process

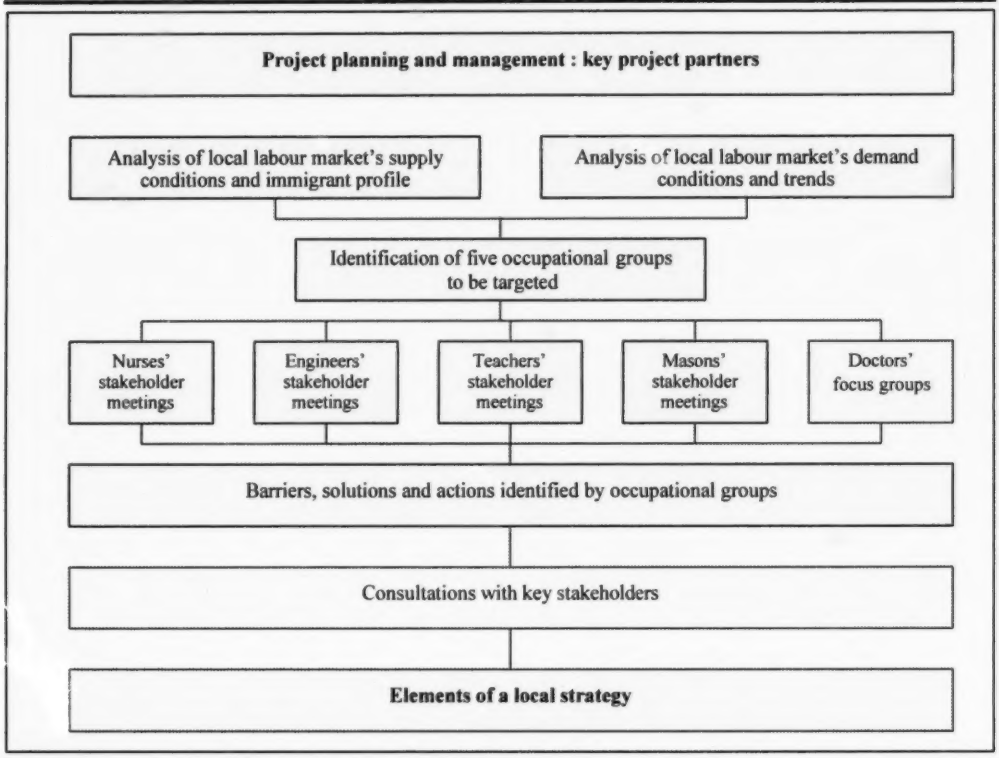
Beyond the specific knowledge to be derived from the identification of barriers, solutions and actions that come from the occupational group discussions, much of the project's value added originates from its original, occupation-specific approach to integrating foreign-trained workers into the local labour market. As compared to proposed models or existing strategies designed to facilitate the integration of foreign-trained workers into the economy, the Ottawa project presents some unique features that are worth discussing. The following describes the major steps that have so far been undertaken during the project's life, which are also illustrated in Chart 1 below.

Step 1: Project planning and management

One of the project's central premises is the reliance upon local partnerships as a means to design and deliver an approach sensitive to local conditions and needs, building upon local talent and resources, and applicable to other areas experiencing similar difficulties. In Ottawa, this partnership includes the United Way/Centraide Ottawa, the Canadian Labour and Business Centre, and LASI World Skills as leading partners, and other key stakeholders involved at the level of specific occupational groups. As well, a Steering Committee comprised of the three levels of government, labour, and local community agencies guides and oversees the project. Members from this Committee have been working closely with those involved locally, particularly with the City of Ottawa and Talent Works under the Ottawa Research and Innovation Centre, to ensure that the

project builds on and integrates with other workforce development initiatives and the broad community planning exercises that are currently underway.

Chart 1
Steps carried out so far in Ottawa Foreign-Trained Workers project


Project planning and management : key project partners
Analysis of local labour market's supply conditions and immigrant profile
Analysis of local labour market's demand conditions and trends
Identification of five occupational groups to be targeted
Nurses' stakeholder meetings
Engineers' stakeholder meetings
Teachers' stakeholder meetings
Masons' stakeholder meetings
Doctors' focus groups
Barriers, solutions and actions identified by occupational groups
Consultations with key stakeholders
Elements of a local strategy

Source: Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2003.

Step 2: Analysis of local labour market supply and demand conditions

In order to meet one of the project's requirements that it remains in line with local labour market conditions, a careful analysis of local labour market supply and demand conditions was carried out. The goal was to ensure that the professions and trades to be targeted for support meet the following conditions, at the occupational level: (1) a reasonable level of demand exists – that is, supply does not exceed demand – so that foreign-trained workers would have a fair chance of finding employment in their field of expertise; (2) prognostics for growth in employment are generally favorable so that employment opportunities would reasonably exist in both the short and the mid term; and (3) there is a sufficient pool of foreign-trained workers in the targeted occupational groups.

In order to meet conditions #1 and 2, collaboration was sought after from the local HRDC office in order to access occupational-specific data. The obtained data was combined with that from other sources – historical Census and Labour Force Survey data – in order to

produce detailed, occupation-specific analyses. On the supply side, the LASI database was used to complement other secondary data, and it allowed researchers to get a sense of the number of foreign-trained workers living in the Ottawa region who were looking for employment in their field of study. Recent statistics from Citizenship and Immigration Canada were also obtained, and they were used to construct a profile of immigrants in the Ottawa region that included information on their demographic characteristics.

Step 3: Identification of occupational groups to be targeted

By combining data on trends, supply, and demand, the research team was able to come up with a short list of occupations that met the above-noted conditions. The following observations can be made about the challenges that were faced in trying to come up with a relevant list of occupations:

1. There is little by way of detailed and up-to-date labour market information that is local and occupation-specific. As a result, it is difficult to get an accurate and recent analysis of supply and demand conditions at that level;
2. It is equally difficult to accurately portrait immigrants who are qualified and willing to work in any given occupation, since existing databases are not designed to meet this labour market-related purpose.

That said, access to detailed labour market information is crucial for any approach designed to facilitate the transition of foreign-trained workers on the basis of local needs and economic conditions.

Step 4: Occupation-specific stakeholder meetings

The labour market and immigrant profile analyses resulted in five groups being selected for inclusion in the project. The next step was to form as many occupation-specific working groups, whose role would be to identify and discuss:

1) barriers and issues affecting the integration of foreign-trained workers into the labour market;
2) possible solutions to the identified barriers and issues; and
3) recommendations or actions that could provide strategic directions for the integration of the workers, and elements of a local strategy.

The composition of each group varied – reflecting the specific regulatory and labour market environment of each profession/trade – but generally included representation from the following groups:

- Individuals who were foreign trained in the highlighted profession or trade, and who are employed or not;
- Regulatory agencies or bodies responsible for accreditation;
- Educational institutions;

- Local, provincial and federal government with responsibility for employment or for professional development;
- Professional associations or unions representing the workers; and
- Employers.

All groups except the doctor's[1] met a few times for facilitated discussion in order to gather views on the above-mentioned topics. Participation during the meetings varied, between 10 and 20 participants normally being in attendance.

Step 5: Consolidation of findings from occupational group meetings

The occupation-specific stakeholder meetings generated a vast amount of information on barriers, solutions, and recommended actions. Since the main purpose of these meetings was to provide specific guidance and direction for developing a local strategy for integrating foreign-trained workers into the local labour market, it was essential to first consolidate this information and derive from it common elements and a body of knowledge that can be transferred to/applied in the context of a local strategy. Based on the notes and proceedings from these sessions, the research team proceeded to develop the following:

- Identification of common and uncommon barriers to the integration of foreign-trained workers into the labour market.
- Grouping of these barriers by type – access to information; licensing and accreditation; access to expert advice and support; assessment services; upgrading and training; knowledge of Canadian workplace practices; or access to labour market/employment opportunities – reflecting the spectrum of activities designed to move a foreign-trained individual from immigration to employment.
- Identification and grouping of solutions to the identified barriers according to the stakeholder(s) with responsibility for them.
- Identification of lessons learned and gaps in knowledge, to guide the development of lines of inquiry for the consultations with key stakeholders.

In order to ensure that findings from the occupational groups be placed in the proper context, a review of the documentation on existing models – the Maytree Foundation model and its local application, the Toronto Immigrant Employment Council discussed earlier –, of provincial and national initiatives aimed at facilitating the integration of foreign-trained workers into the Canadian society, and of socio-economic studies of immigrants, was carried out. The review elicited a context and a framework for distilling the findings from the group discussions, the latter being reflected in the discussion of barriers presented below (section 1.1). It also provided the research team with additional

[1] Given the foreign credential recognition work already underway in the Ottawa region and province-wide, a different consultative approach is being used with this group, culminating in focus group sessions to be held in the fall of 2003.

information and ideas about how to best design a local strategy for the integration of foreign-trained workers.

Step 6: Consultations with key stakeholders

Planned for the fall of 2003, consultations with key stakeholders will serve two central purposes: (1) to validate findings from the earlier research activities, as consolidated in the present document; and (2) to fill information gaps identified by the research so far. Accordingly, they will be probed for their reaction to the list of barriers, solutions, recommended actions, and elements of a local strategy that have been identified so far.

While the identity of key stakeholders to be consulted has yet to be determined, they will come from some or all of these already identified stakeholder groups, in addition to other local and provincial agencies that may have a role to play in the design and implementation of a future local strategy (for instance, local economic and social development agencies). Depending on constraints and circumstances, the consultations will be conducted using a mix of phone and in-person interviews, and focus group discussions.

Step 7: Elements of a local strategy

Combining the information to be gathered from key stakeholders (Step 6) with that generated from the occupational group discussions will provide the building blocks to an Ottawa-based strategy designed to facilitate the integration of foreign-trained workers into the local economy. At a minimum, the strategy should include the following elements:

1. Detailed description of potential roles and responsibilities according to both the stakeholder groups to be involved and the activities/initiatives/programs at the core of the strategy, and
2. Description of an overall process and specific steps leading to the development and implementation of a local strategy.

While it is difficult to foresee what the specific approach, structure, process and content of a local strategy will be, it will need to be broad enough to accommodate a wide range of stakeholders while being sensitive to occupation-specific needs and conditions.

2.2 Barriers and solutions

A good proportion of the discussions held during the occupational group sessions focused on the specific barriers faced by foreign-trained workers in their attempt to find employment in the profession or trade they were trained for. The list of barriers is long and runs the gamut from difficulties in accessing labour market information *prior* to moving into Canada, to difficulties adjusting to the workplace once established in a job. In this section, we provide an overview of these barriers, focusing on commonalties among the various occupational groups. The discussion is organized according to the various steps that exist along the immigration to labour market integration spectrum.

Table 1
Barriers identified by the four occupational group participants

Type of barriers	*Barrier identified by...*			
	Teachers	*Engineers*	*Masons*	*Nurses*
1. Access to information				
Lack of knowledge of/information on accreditation process	■			■
Lack of knowledge of/information on licensing requirement			■	
Lack of knowledge of/information on local labour market			■	
Lack of knowledge about services available from local agencies				
Lack of knowledge about services available from governments	■			
2. Licensing and accreditation				
Bureaucracy	■	■		
Difficulty in obtaining documentation from abroad	■		■	
Heavy/unrealistic requirements regarding documentation	■	■		
Financial cost of accreditation too high				■
Lack of availability of/difficulty with prior learning assessment			■	
3. Access to expert advice, support				
Lack of mentoring and/or apprenticeship	■			
4. Upgrading and training				
Lack of financial assistance for/availability of bridging programs			■	■
Difficult access to/lack of academic/basic skills training				
Difficult access to/lack of workplace-based language training		■		■
Difficult access/lack of availability of technical skills training				
Difficult access to internships/in-residence programs		■		
5. Knowledge of Canadian workplace practices				
Catch 22 of lack of Canadian experience/lack of job opportunities	■	■	■	■
Lack of knowledge of Canadian standards, regulations				
Lack of knowledge of working culture, values	■			
6. Access to labour market/employment opportunities				
Difficulty adjusting to/lack of knowledge of the culture				
Lack of jobs/employment opportunities		■		
Lack of assistance for addressing mobility issues				
Cultural bias, racism at time of hiring	■			
Lack of employer contacts	■	■	■	■

■ Severe/common barrier Minor/uncommon barrier

Source: Canadian Labour and Business Centre, *Occupational Group Proceedings*, 2003.

As one can see from Table 1, the range of barriers encountered by immigrants who were trained in teaching, masonry, engineering or nursing is quite broad. This observation suggests that there is not a single most important barrier that all foreign-trained workers have to face and, thus there is no silver bullet that can be designed to alleviate these barriers. That said, the following comments can be made:

- Relatively few participants were critical of their experience in accessing prior learning and credential recognition services. It may be that these types of support do not play a large role in facilitating their integration into the local labour market or, conversely, that access to these forms of support does not currently suffer from any difficulty.
- *Lack of employer contacts* has been identified as a severe barrier by participants from three of the four occupational groups, ranking as one of the most important/common barrier. Clearly, working with employers will be central to designing a local strategy that can bring results.
- Equally severe is the *lack of Canadian work experience* leading to lack of employment opportunities. Again, participants from three of the four occupational groups made mention of it as a common barrier to access to employment opportunities.
- Relatively speaking, barriers related to licensing and accreditation – in particular the bureaucracy, difficulty in obtaining documentation from abroad, and heavy or unrealistic requirements – have been identified by a large proportion of participants as common barriers.

Perhaps the single most important generalization that can be derived from the above observations is that barriers are unique to each type occupation or trade and, one might suspect, they also vary widely from one local labour market to the next.

2.3 Recommended solutions and project outcomes

Given the relatively large number of specific of solutions identified and recommendations made by the various occupational groups, this section of the report focuses on those solutions that may have more universal application, even if they have not necessarily been reported by all (or most of) the occupational groups. They are organized according to the type of stakeholders they are addressed to.

Table 2
Summary of specific solutions proposed to alleviate barriers
By occupational group and by stakeholder

Type of stakeholder	*Solution identified by...*			
	Teachers	*Engineers*	*Masons*	*Nurses*
Accreditation and licensing bodies				
• Develop simple -to-understand flowchart of the accreditation process	■			
• Have a 1-800 number that is widely known or a 'government online'	■			
• Ontario College of Teachers to revise its orientation package	■			
• More effective, widespread use of PLAR			■	■
Educational institutions				
• More effective, targeted language training		■	■	■
• Greater consistency for training; more compulsory programs			■	
Employers				
• Employers to make available information about shortages early on	■		■	
• Employers to send information about openings to local agencies	■		■	
• Promote coaching to help understand cultural aspect of the workplace	■	■		■
Internationally-trained workers				
• Some of them might provide mentoring to less experienced ones	■	■		■
• Offer to do volunteer work to know employers/get experience	■	■		
• Form association/network to support and assist newcomers	■			
• Attend seminars put up by employers, job fairs	■	■		
• Try to meet employers/professors informally; strategic use of emails		■		
Local agencies serving immigrants				
• Form groups of local volunteers to support immigrants with process	■			■
• Organize occupation-specific conferences/workshops	■	■		
Professional associations/unions				
• Assistance with mentoring, job shadowing	■		■	
• Have unions involved in screening/assessment of candidates			■	
Federal government				
• CIC to provide occupation-specific info kits to new immigrants	■		■	■
• CIC to rely more upon Internet to ease access to timely info	■	■		
• CIC to provide detailed lists of local agencies serving immigrants	■			
• HRDC should work with accrediting body to improve recognition		■		
• HRDC should raise awareness about its Foreign Worker program		■		
Provincial government				
• Make financial assistance programs better suited to immigrants		■	■	■

Others				
• Need for better coordination between government agencies				
• Develop incentive program for employers				

Source: Canadian Labour and Business Centre, *Occupational Group Proceedings*, 2003.

One can see from the above table that, at one end of the spectrum, some of the solutions identified by occupational group participants find broader acceptance. At the other, some solutions are occupation specific, to the point that they have little relevance to all occupational groups. In terms of the former, the following solutions have been put forward by three of the four groups: better access to language training adapted to the workplace; access mentoring that would be supported by more established, experienced foreign-trained workers; and availability of financial assistance programs that are better suited to the particular needs of foreign-trained workers.

Beyond that, Table 2 shows that a significant proportion of the proposed solutions are of relevance to only one or two of the four groups – which is hardly surprising. It is clear, thus, that solutions to the barriers identified by the various occupational group participants need to closely match the particular needs, conditions and circumstances of these individual groups, making it difficult to suggest a set of solutions that will address the needs of all groups and, at the same time, that would be specific/detailed enough to be useful.

3. SYNTHESIS AND DIRECTIONS

Lessons learned and project-related outcomes

By and large, the central lesson to be learned from the project so far is that *the process* of planning together, forming partnerships, and gathering in the same room stakeholders on an occupation-specific basis can bring nearly as much value as the information on barriers and solutions that is generated from these meetings.

There were few surprises in terms of the nature of the barriers and the solutions that were identified by occupational group participants, although this type of information should not be discounted as unimportant. Clearly, the information can and should be used to provide a focal point for intervention at the level of individual stakeholders, on an occupation-specific basis. Beyond that, however, much value was derived from planning and undertaking a local process of identifying and removing barriers for the integration of foreign-trained workers. In particular:

- *Informal information exchange*: during the course of several meetings, misconceptions about, for instance, accreditation or university admission requirements were cleared simply by having representatives from the various stakeholder groups present in the room and explaining their position. Such exchanges proved more effective at conveying important, often complex information, than relying upon other means of communication.
- *Direct project-related outcomes*: As a result of the project, formal and informal networks of contacts were developed, stakeholder visibility increased, and some specific outcomes emerged:
    - As a result of the work undertaken in the context of this project, two partner organizations – LASI World Skills and the CLBC – ended up as members of a consortium that submitted a proposal to the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for funding for a bridging program designed to prepare internationally trained teachers for employment.
    - The CLBC has been approached by Ottawa-based Centre for Research and Innovation to be involved in a project on Immigrant Needs Assessment in Ottawa. The project has just received funding from HRDC.
- *Creation of local linkages*: Although more difficult to measure, several of the stakeholders that were involved in the project have created linkages with other organizations, as a result of their participation in the occupational group discussions and subsequent trust building. The local HRDC office, the local MTCU office, OCRI, the local colleges and universities, to name a few, are some of the organizations with which linkages were established.
- *Building of local capacity*: By pooling together resources and sharing expertise, several of the occupational group's participating organizations have been able to develop their own capacity, either by internalizing newly-acquired knowledge and

information, or by adapting their practice to account for new, more collaborative ways of 'doing things.' Again, such capacity building is difficult to measure but anecdotal evidence suggests that it represents a significant project outcome.

Another crucial lesson to be learned from the project is the importance of targeting project interventions according to sound labour market analysis. There would be little point of designing interventions for occupations for which there is little demand, or where there is no available supply of foreign-trained workers. Likewise, broad-based strategies designed around a universal approach – with little consideration for occupation-specific supply and demand conditions – would have in our views little chance of succeeding.

Next steps

In the final analysis, one could argue that the local strategy that has been implemented so far in the context of this project loosely represents a location-specific application of the Maytree model that offers some pros and cons. On the one hand, it goes beyond the model in that it tries to adapt it to the reality of Ottawa's labour market, thus providing a very practical setting to it. It also makes room for a broader range of stakeholders – namely unions – than what the original Maytree model had envisaged, increasing its appeal to a broader range of potential stakeholders.

On the other hand, the steps undertaken so far in the project fall short of a full blown, comprehensive local strategy designed to alleviate barriers to the integration of foreign-trained workers. For one, it is still ad hoc in the sense that no structure has been put in place to ensure that integration efforts could be sustained in a mid- to long-term horizon. Second, given lack of time and resources – but also by design, it focuses on a limited number of occupations, thus overlooking other occupations that may be in demand and for which a pool of available foreign-trained workers may exist.

In terms of specific next steps, there are a number of challenges that lie ahead and that may guide the future development of the local strategy, namely:

1. The *challenge of sustainability* represents one of the most important issues to resolve. Efforts so far have been largely project based, with the consequence that they have a limited time span. Clearly, the nature of the labour market integration problem is such that more sustained efforts will be required before the 'transition penalty' faced by immigrants can be reduced, thus calling for more than piece meal, ad hoc initiatives.
2. As the evidence from the project suggests, *defining a one-size-fits-all strategy* that would be sensitive to the specific needs and conditions of the various occupational groups represents a serious challenge. The Maytree model may offer some insights here: a leaders' council made up of the key stakeholders, combined with working groups focused on solving topic- or occupation-specific issues, might be an interesting model to consider.

3. As the project unfolded, other gaps emerged that may warrant future attention:
    - Obtaining *detailed, up-to-date statistics* on local labour market conditions, especially at the occupational level, proved both time consuming and only partly successful, despite the best efforts of the local HRDC office and of other recipients of statistical information. Short of designing new surveys, this problem is likely to remain for the time being, but perhaps more can be done with better coordination and reporting among the stakeholders.
    - Obtaining accurate *information on foreign-trained workers* also proved to be a difficult task. The reality is that most databases that contain information on these individuals are not designed to serve for labour market analysis purposes. They typically do not include information that would prove essential for such purposes, or the information is incomplete or out of date. Improvements to these databases – provided that resources are made available for that – would go a long way in providing an accurate picture of the pool of foreign-trained workers that can meet the local demand.
    - It was clear from the discussions that local serving agencies can provide a useful *interface between foreign-trained workers and potential employers*. Yet, employers do not typically contact these agencies in order to get help in meeting their staffing needs. This interfacing role could possibly be enhanced and formalized during the development and implementation of a local strategy.

In closing, it is hoped that the present document will provide useful reference points for moving forward. As a guide to develop a consultation approach for the next phase (the consultations with key stakeholders), it can provide some directions as to what areas of questioning should be focused upon:

1. How can we reconcile the need for a broader approach – inclusive of all important stakeholders – while being sensitive to the needs of each profession or trade? Is the TIEC a good model to replicate, with some adaptation, in the Ottawa context?
2. Is a (physical) one-stop shop the best approach for providing services more effectively? If so, what agency would best fit the bill? What additional resources would be required, if any, to enable this agency to play an expanded role vis-à-vis internationally-trained workers?
3. How to address the sustainability issue? Would core funding be required in order to ensure the integration issue is adequately dealt with in the short, medium and long term? If so, what level of funding would be required and who should provide it?
4. What specific strategies, initiatives, or programs could be put in place to fill the gaps identified above? Who should be involved? What should their specific roles and responsibilities be?

5. Given the strategic importance of accurate and detailed labour market information, how can such information be made available in a more timely and cost effective fashion?

These questions and others should allow the key partner organizations to fill some gaps, validate findings so far, and move forward toward building a community-based strategy that will be truly reflective of the Ottawa situation, and effective at accrediting and integrating foreign-trained workers into the economy.

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Appendix A
Selected provincial initiatives

The following provides some indication of recent initiatives in place in Ontario and Manitoba that are interesting in terms of either their approach or their content. While by no means exhaustive, these descriptions should provide some sense of what some provincial governments are doing to facilitate the integration of foreign-trained workers into the economy.

Ontario

In Ontario, initiatives undertaken by the provincial government's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), by the City of Toronto, and in the City of Ottawa are of particular relevance. At the provincial government level, several initiatives are worth noting. At a broad level, the province's *Access to Professions and Trades* (APT) initiative was launched in 1995 as a means to promote access to professions and trades by qualified immigrants.

A fairly recent provincial initiative, the *Sector-specific orientation, Terminology training, Information & Counseling (STIC),* provides training manuals and self-assessment tools to community agencies, occupational regulatory bodies, and employers in order to assist skilled immigrants to speed up entry into their occupational field. It fills an important gap in the immigration-to-employment continuum, allowing individuals to create a computerized inventory of their skills and knowledge, and compare them to a job profile in order to identify gaps and plan upgrading activities.

The province of Ontario is also funding various bridging programs (a $12 million, three-year funding commitment) designed to provide foreign-trained workers with the skills and knowledge they need to practice their profession, occupation or trade. In 2002, nine programs were funded for a total of $3.6 million, including funding for three Ottawa-based programs: $546,775 for the *Alternative Teacher Accreditation Program for Teachers with International Experience (APAPTIE)*, $221,148 for *Three Choices: New Options for Foreign-Trained Nurses Seeking Employment in Ontario*, and $409,638 for *Vitesse Biotechnology Bridging Program for Foreign-Trained Professionals*.

ATAPTIE was developed for a small group of internationally-trained teachers in Ottawa who required a full year program of teacher education. It began in Ottawa in May 2002 as a partnership among the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, the Faculty of Education of Queen's University and Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI World Skills). The program accepts up to 30 candidates a year for a full year B.Ed. program and focuses only in training teachers for the primary-junior division. A second cohort began in July 2003 and a final cohort will begin in July 2004. The Ontario College of Teachers serves as a resource to this program.

Other Ontario initiatives worth noting include:

- MTCU has been developing occupational fact sheets that provide up-to-date information on licensing requirements and labour market conditions. As of the summer of 2002, fifteen of these fact sheets – 12 for professions and 3 for trades – had been produced, with more expected to be developed. In addition, interactive fact sheets are available on-line for pharmacists, nurses, and engineering technologists.

- In 2001-02, MTCU had budgeted $9 million under its Job Connect initiative to help newcomers settle into the province.

Manitoba

As mentioned earlier, the Government of Manitoba has developed a Framework for a Strategy on Qualifications Recognition. This framework is the continuation of efforts first spelled out in October, 2002 by the Minister of Manitoba Labour and Immigration, who announced the formation of a Ministerial Committee on Qualifications Recognition that would involve eight different provincial government departments. The resulting framework recommends that the Manitoba government take a leadership role in the development of a strategy to address the issue of qualifications recognition and entry to practice of highly skilled immigrants.

At this time, the Strategy is scheduled to be finalized in the fall of 2003, following a review by each participating department and ensuing recommendations. Over and above the development of this much anticipated framework, the Manitoba government and other provincial stakeholders have over the years been engaged in more ad hoc initiatives aimed at facilitating the integration of foreign-trained workers into the labour market. While it would go beyond the scope of this report to list them all, the following provides highlights of interesting provincial initiatives:

- The Manitoba government provides language benchmarks for certain occupations and provides individuals with an assessment of their standing against these benchmarks.

- The government contributes up to $750 to credential assessment/licensing/exam fees for foreign-trained professionals, up to an annual budget allocation of $20-30,000 (in 2001).

- Along the same lines, the government runs the Credential Recognition Program, which provides a wage subsidy to employers who provide employment to highly skilled immigrants. The subsidy is up to $4,500 for 6 months (in 2001).

- The government also funds the Manitoba Association of Doctors to provide information, advice and orientation to foreign-trained doctors. A bridging program also exists – the Manitoba Licensure Program for International Medical Graduates – that includes a *Clinicians Assessment and Professional Enhancement* initiative.

- Another initiative funded by the Manitoba government is a bridging program for engineers in partnership with a private AUTOCAD training company. It combines

language training with technical skills, and enjoyed in 2001 an 80% placement rate.

While the above list is by no means exhaustive, it demonstrates the province's commitment to easing the integration of foreign-trained professionals into the province's labour market. While not definitive at this time, the proposed Strategy on Qualifications Recognition may provide a structure to what has so far been a range of innovative but uncoordinated initiatives.

Appendix B
Key features of the proposed Toronto Immigrant Employment Council

Goal

- To improve access to employment for immigrants in the Toronto region so that they are able to use the skills, education and experience they bring with them.

Objectives

- Engage employers proactively and strategically in the integration of immigrants into their labour force.
- Create a local environment of collaboration in the delivery of innovative and effective labour market integration programs for immigrants.
- Champion the integration of immigrants broadly.
- Facilitate the provision of accurate and relevant information on Toronto region labour market issues to immigrants through existing portals.
- Provide a local perspective in areas of federal, provincial and municipal policy and program development as it pertains to labour market integration of immigrants.

Structure

- A regional alliance/coalition of employers, labour, post-secondary educational institutions, immigrant associations, community agencies, all levels of government, and occupational regulatory bodies.

Working Groups

- Working groups will be formed on the basis of specific Council priorities – such as mentoring, career bridging, etc. – and handle various tasks.

Secretariat

- The Council, its chair and the working groups will be supported by a small secretariat led by the Maytree Foundation. It will provide administrative support, communications and networking capabilities, as well as research and policy analysis expertise.

Funding

- In-kind contributions from Council and working group members will complement core funding to be sought from local, regional, provincial and federal governments for secretariat funding and from other sources for project-specific funding.

Source: Lynn Morrow Consulting, July 2003.